

## House Passes Matsui Cruise Safety Legislation

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CONTACT: Mara Lee

(202) 225-7163

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Coast Guard Reauthorization Will Protect Americans Aboard Cruise Ships

WASHINGTON, DC &ndash; Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D-CA) joined with 385 colleagues in the House of Representatives to pass H.R. 3619, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010. Included in this legislation to authorize funding of the United States Coast Guard is a provision authored by Representative Matsui, H.R. 3360, the Cruise Vessel Safety and Security Act of 2009. With today's passage of this critical and common-sense legislation, Americans on board cruise ships will finally have the protection they need on what ought to be an enjoyable vacation.

&ldquo;Today marks a milestone in our tireless fight to award victims the safety and security they need and deserve,&rdquo; said Congresswoman Matsui. &ldquo;For far too long, American families and particularly young women have unknowingly been at risk when signing up for cruise vacations. The passage of this legislation will not only help recent victims of cruise crimes and offer them enhanced protection, but will help from preventing further crimes from happening. We cannot sit back and witness these violent and reprehensible acts to continue.&rdquo;

Rep. Matsui was contacted regarding the need for increased protections for Americans on cruise ships in April, 2006, when Sacramentan Laurie Dishman, wrote to her for help. Ms. Dishman was the victim of a sexual assault while on a cruise vacation, and was given no assistance by the cruise line in properly securing evidence of the assault, identifying her attacker who was an employee of the cruise ship, or prosecuting the crime once back on shore. Frustrated, she reached out to her Representative for help. Rep. Matsui immediately began working on this legislation and held multiple hearings with the support of Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Jim Oberstar (D-MN) and Chairman of the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Elijah Cummings (D-MD), to bring the reality of what was happening on these ships to light.

“Congresswoman Matsui has taken the lead on this very important issue and has helped raise awareness about crimes on cruise ships all over the world,” expressed Dishman. “I cannot thank her enough for not only answering my call for help, but for helping to make it safer for passengers when taking a cruise. She truly is my hero and has stood by my side for the past 3½ years.”

“I am proud to be joined today by my constituent, Laurie Dishman, who first brought this issue to my attention,” said Matsui. “Her courage and conviction in speaking out and telling her story has been the catalyst for this legislation; this truly is a victory for her and the hundreds of victims and their families who have advocated for these critical safety measures over the last several years.”

Today’s legislation will force the cruise industry to comply with a number of security provisions including specific rail heights, peep holes, warning devices, and cabin security measures. Additionally, the bill also requires that vessels are equipped with a video surveillance system to assist in documenting and prosecuting crimes, and it requires vessels to maintain a log book to record reports on specified complaints. Finally, the provision will mandate cruise vessel personnel to contact the nearest FBI office as soon as possible to report incidents involving homicide, suspicious deaths, missing U.S. nationals, kidnapping, assault, and other serious occurrences. Under current law, American cruise companies have no requirement to notify federal law enforcement should a crime occur in international waters.

“It is symbolic that today we pass critical funding for the United States Coast Guard along with cruise safety legislation illustrating to all Americans that Congress and the President are committed to the security of Americans on the high seas,” added Matsui. “From cruise passengers to cargo ships, the Coast Guard Reauthorization bill will enhance our homeland security efforts and assure the maritime safety of millions of Americans.”

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